

# ***FTC Consumer Alert***

Federal Trade Commission ■ Bureau of Consumer Protection ■ Office of Consumer and Business Education

## **PROBLEMS WITH ONLINE HOLIDAY PURCHASES?**

Washington, DC — Online shoppers set new records during this past holiday season, racking up billions of dollars in Internet purchases. Initial industry and media reports suggest that many consumers were satisfied with their online shopping experiences. But some reports suggest that not all e-tailers met their “in time for the holiday” delivery promises.

By law, retailers — including e-tailers — are required to ship an order within the time stated on their website (or in their ads) or at the time the order is placed. If a company doesn’t promise a time, it must ship the order within 30 days after receiving it. And if the company is unable to ship within the promised time, it is required to give the buyer an “option notice,” which allows the consumer to agree to the delay or cancel the order and receive a prompt refund.

If you had an unsatisfactory online shopping experience, the best course of action is to contact the retailer. If you’re dissatisfied with the way the matter is handled, take your business elsewhere in the future. However, it is important to recognize that while some business practices — such as notifying the consumer that the order will be delayed in a less-timely manner than the consumer would like — may be poor customer service, they’re not necessarily against the law.

The Federal Trade Commission would like to hear from consumers about their online shopping experiences. Contact the FTC by calling the toll-free helpline at 1-877-FTC-HELP (382-4357); TDD: 202-326-2502 or using the online complaint form at [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov). You also can write to the Commission at Consumer Response Center, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20580. Although the Commission cannot resolve individual problems for consumers, it can act against a company if it sees a pattern of possible law violations.

Federal Trade Commission	Toll-free 1-877-FTC-HELP
<a href="http://www.ftc.gov">www.ftc.gov</a>	For the Consumer